

VZCZCXRO9242
OO RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHIL #4574 2981419
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 251419Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2763
INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 7648
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2028
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 7763
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 3810
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 2305
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS ISLAMABAD 004574

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN'S RELIGIOUS PARTIES: AN UNHAPPY MARRIAGE

REF: ISLAMABAD 4340

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Differences have surfaced again between Jamiat Ulema Islam's Fazlur Rehman (JUI-F) and Jamaat Islami (JI) -- the two largest parties within the religious Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) coalition. The row this time is over MMA's failure to dissolve the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) Assembly prior to President Musharraf's October 6 re-election. JUI-F is viewed as having accommodated the ruling coalition and military establishment, contrary to JI's more confrontational approach. While both parties have recently said they are calling it quits, both JUI-F and JI know they would suffer at the polls if the MMA were to split. After general elections, most observers predict JUI-F will side with whichever party forms a ruling coalition. End summary.

The Plan

¶2. (U) Leading up to the October 6 presidential election, the All Parties Democratic Movement (APDM), an opposition party alliance, assumed the MMA-dominated NWFP Assembly would be dissolved. Denying Musharraf any of the province's 65 electoral votes was intended to be a political embarrassment for Musharraf.

¶3. (U) The APDM parties -- principally Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and the MMA -- decided September 27 to order all of their members to resign on October 2 from the National and Provincial Assemblies. The NWFP Assembly was specifically excluded from this order because, being controlled by the MMA, it would be dissolved on the same day.

Feeling Aggrieved

¶4. (U) However, before the MMA could dissolve the NWFP Assembly, pro-government parties orchestrated a procedural coup -- a no-confidence vote against the JUI-F Chief Minister -- which stalled further action and blocked dissolution until after the presidential election. Once the dust had settled, the finger pointing began.

¶5. (U) JI accused the provincial assembly's Chief Minister (a JUI-F partisan) of delaying his call on the NWFP Governor to dissolve the provincial assembly; JUI-F countered that the assembly's speaker (a JI party man) purposely recognized the no-confidence motion on the floor of the assembly against JUI-F leadership. By October 6, JI's 24 NWFP assembly members had resigned, while JUI-F members remained, three of whom voted for Musharraf.

¶6. (SBU) Sources report that JUI-F's Fazlur Rehman and JI's Qazi Hussain Ahmed are no longer on speaking terms. This is not the first time, however, that these two party leaders have clashed. The two differed on the 2006 Women's Protection Bill; Ahmed favored resignation then too, while Rehman opposed the decision.

Rehman's Agenda

17. (SBU) The widely-held perspective of MMA contacts is that JUI-F's Rehman has accommodated Musharraf. The delay between when the APDM decided to resign (September 27) and when its members actually did resign (October 2) was unnecessary, yet Rehman insisted upon it. By the time the resignations occurred on October 2, the MMA had no maneuvering room to counter a procedural motion, which is exactly what happened and which JI and JUI-F sources claim was Rehman's intention all along. Moreover, our various MMA interlocutors point out that there was no legal hurdle preventing the JUI-F Chief Minister from seeking immediate dissolution of the NWFP Assembly after APDM's September 27 decision.

18. (SBU) Rehman makes no secret of his aspirations to become Prime Minister of a coalition government, with PolOffs or more publicly. (Comment: Post considers any scenario with Rehman as Prime Minister highly unlikely. End comment.) JUI-F deputy Ghafoor Haidri has also mentioned to PolOffs Rehman's willingness to quit MMA after the upcoming general elections. Rehman appears to have kept his future options open by helping Musharraf save face now.

PATTERSON